

What's the difference between Optometrists, Ophthalmologists and Ophthalmic Dispensers/Ophthalmic Technicians—a.k.a. Opticians?



consumer**brief**

WHAT IS AN OPTOMETRIST?

Optometrists perform eye examinations. Optometrists can diagnose eye disease, such as glaucoma, and remove foreign particles from the eye. All licensed optometrists can prescribe eyeglasses and contact lenses and fill such prescriptions. All licensed optometrists can fit contact lenses, explain how contact lenses are worn and place and remove contact lenses from a consumer's eye. If certified to do so, an optometrist can prescribe topical eye medication such as eye drops and medication taken orally for the treatment of eye conditions and eye diseases. Optometrists can offer vision therapy for vision problems such as crossed eyes or double vision.

An optometrist can be identified as an optometric physician or a doctor of optometry. The "O.D." after an optometrist's name stands for "doctor of optometry." Optometrists are not medical doctors and may not perform eye surgery. Optometrists may not diagnose disease or conditions that do not pertain to the eye. Optometrists may not prescribe medicine for cosmetic purposes or prescribe medicine that is not for the purpose of treating the eyes.

An optometrist will refer you to an ophthalmologist if it is suspected that you may require further treatment such as surgery.

WHAT IS AN OPHTHALMOLOGIST?

Ophthalmologists are medical doctors. The "M.D." after an ophthalmologist's name stands for "medical doctor." Ophthalmologists can perform eye examinations and diagnose eye diseases, eye disorders or other eye conditions. Ophthalmologists can treat all eye problems and if necessary, perform surgery on your eyes. Ophthalmologists can prescribe eyeglasses, contact lenses and medicine. Ophthalmologists can fill eyeglass and contact lens prescriptions. Ophthalmologists can fit contact lenses, explain how contact lenses are worn and place and

remove contact lenses from a consumer's eye. Ophthalmologists can offer vision therapy.

Ophthalmologists can specialize in specific areas such as the retina or the cornea. Eye conditions or disorders may be a result of medical conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure; therefore, ophthalmologists will work with or consult other physicians concerning your medical history or condition.

WHAT IS AN OPHTHALMIC DISPENSER/TECHNICIAN?

Ophthalmic dispensers/ophthalmic technicians, also known as opticians, make eyeglasses based on a prescription written by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist. Opticians measure the curve of the eyeglass lens and the distance between your pupils to ensure that your eyeglasses fit properly. An optician may adjust the frames that you select to achieve the best vision for you. An optician will also be able to tell you if the frames that you select are right for your prescription. Opticians can reproduce and replace eyeglass lenses. Opticians can dispense contact lenses and explain how they are worn, but they are not permitted to place or remove a contact lens from a consumer's eye or change a contact lens prescription.

There are two types of opticians. An ophthalmic dispenser prepares and dispenses both eyeglasses and contact lenses. An ophthalmic dispenser can duplicate or replace existing lenses, spectacles, eyeglasses or contact lenses. An ophthalmic technician fabricates eyeglass lenses and mounts the lenses into eyeglass frames. An ophthalmic technician can also reproduce existing eyeglass lenses.

An optician may not perform eye examinations, remove foreign particles from the eye, prescribe eyeglasses or contact lenses and may not prescribe medication.

Contact information for all three types of eye care professionals can be found on the back of this brief.

800-242-5846 • www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov

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New Jersey Division of
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FOR INFORMATION ON OPTOMETRISTS, CONTACT:

New Jersey State Board of Optometrists
P.O. Box 45012
Newark, New Jersey 07101
973-504-6440
www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov/optometry



FOR INFORMATION ON OPHTHALMOLOGISTS, CONTACT:

State Board of Medical Examiners
P.O. Box 183
Trenton, New Jersey 08625
609-826-7100
www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/bme



**FOR INFORMATION ON OPHTHALMIC DISPENSERS AND
OPHTHALMIC TECHNICIANS (a.k.a. OPTICIANS), CONTACT:**

State Board of Examiners of Ophthalmic Dispensers and
Ophthalmic Technicians
P.O. Box 45011
Newark, New Jersey 07101
973-504-6435
www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov/opht



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